

House Natural Resources Committee  
Monday – March 9, 2009

EXHIBIT 2  
DATE 3/9/09  
SP 107

Richard E. Grady  
9312 Lincoln Road West  
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Mr Chairman - Representative Mike Milburn and members of the Committee, I am submitting my written testimony and a supporting document by Janice Grosfield, a Montana Logging family from Drummond Montana, on behalf of the Grady family ranching operations to help our Montana timber industry.

We need to address and move forward with a fuel modification program using sound forest management practices on mechanized training, fuel reduction on state classified forested lands, and improve the initial attack of the DNRC fire suppression programs, based on the recommendations from the Fire Suppression Interim Committee report, "The Price of Flame".

The Grady family ranching operations have over 4000 acres of private classified forest lands and lease over 600 acres of classified state forested lands located 25 miles Northwest of the state capital that will be affected in a positive way by the passage of these specific legislative bills that I am supporting today.

Montana is receiving over \$800 million federal dollars through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Federal Stimulus Act of 2009. The Legislative Fiscal Division has identified under the Natural Resources and Transportation- Section C as of 3/3/09 through the DNRC/Wildland Fire Management, that the legislature may wish to determine if funds through State and Private Forestry grants through the Stimulus Act for Montana could be used for pilot fuel reduction projects, education, training and increase use of biomass for energy development.

Governor Schweitzer on March 6, 2009 through a press release indicated his support of \$10 million dollars to help Montana's timber industry given the current economic conditions of the industry. Montana citizens need to support our timber industry, deal with the bug kill on private and state lands through sound forest management practices, and not see the end of our timber industry, which has happened in Southwest of the United States, like the States of Arizona and New Mexico.

**Senate Bill No. 107 -Sponsored by Senator Dave Lewis**

I support the legislation sponsored by Senator Lewis to work with the Montana State University Fire Services Training School to help with the professional training on mechanized equipment for fuel reduction mitigation and fire suppression.

We have an opportunity for the private sector within our timber industry to work with the school on ways to provide education to State and Federal Agency Incident Management Teams improve fire suppression costs with mechanized equipment.

Also with the efforts of **Senate Bill 113 sponsored Jim Keane** to work on a pilot program for mechanized fuel reductions on State Lands, as an opportunity to begin dealing with the dead fuels on are private lands, state lands and the support for the timber industry that could be enhance with the stimulus funding and the support of the Governor.

I believe there is an opportunity for the private sector and our states agencies to **foster cooperative partnerships**, through the Montana Logging Association and other private organizations to help provide equipment, training programs, etc to begin educating and developing fuel modification programs on state lands, around the urban-interface areas, and hopefully looking at biomass development for future energy development in our state.

**Senate Bill 111 – Senator Rick Ripley**

I support the efforts of Senator Ripley to clarify the DNRC role in wildfire initial attack since my family ranching operation is affected by the coordinated efforts of the federal, state and local government (Canyon Creek Rural Fire District) on wildland pre-suppression and suppression activities as fire threaten to move onto state or private land from adjoining federal lands.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank-you for the opportunity to testify in support of these bills, before the House Natural Resources Committee.

Sincerely

*/s/ Richard E. Grady*

Richard E. Grady

Mr. Chairman & members of the committee, my name is Janice Grosfield, husband & I are equipment and trucking contractors based in Drummond.

1. I'd like to talk today about SB 107 and the opportunity for improved operations and utilization of mechanized equipment in fire suppression. As all of us have seen, the national policy of forest management in our agencies over the last 20 years has changed. Due to these policy changes, logging, road building, road maint., and the use of mechanized equipment on our public lands has diminished. The decline of projects has caused a demographic change in our agencies personnel. The logging engineers, foresters, and timber sale administrators that used to be in the woods administering timber sales and road projects and working around equipment are no longer positions the USFS requires. The trend in of agency jobs has shifted to positions like biologists, hydrologists computer specialists. People by who no fault of their own, have fractional working knowledge of any mechanized equipment because the agency today has a limited need for equipment nor, does the agency own and operate and heavy equipment for fire suppression. In the meantime, those of us that own and operate equipment in the woods have been making a living working for private landowners as well as a few state projects. The idea of a mechanized equipment academy is to establish a working relationship with agency fire managers and people who own and operate mechanized equipment since there is very little opportunity anymore for these two groups to work together in the forest and on the ground preparing for fire season, not only here in MT, but nationwide.
2. Fire personnel come into MT from all over the nation. States like CO, NM, AZ have lost their forest products infrastructure and when type I or II teams rotate into our region during fire season, there is almost no recognition of mechanized equipment as an effective fire suppression tool because the fire managers from out of state don't have an industry of equipment owners working in their forests. Underutilization & mis-use of equipment have disappointed and unproductive results. For those of us that have modified log skidders, trucks, and dozers into firefighting machines, the work and training & inspections happen in the spring. The alternative to that choice we as private contractors have made during spring breakup is to have our crews file for unemployment, however when they stay working in the spring at our shops preparing for the fire season we can keep the experienced equipment operators working. When we go back to the woods in the summer, fire restrictions during hot summers shut down operations of logging and road building by mid to late August. If we are shut down and not hired w/ our equipment for fire suppression, our employees don't have much choice except to tap into unemployment. As owners of the companies we have invested thousands of dollars into equipment and training to keep our employees and equipment working. Mechanized equipment is cost effective & the safety of climate controlled enclosed cabs which under USFS contract rules must be equipped with Roll over protection and falling object protection to keep operators safe and productive providing experienced operators 24 hours a day with the use of well-lit machines. We have a wonderful opportunity in Montana to be the host state for a National Mechanized Equipment Training Program. When you consider the diversified firefighting contractor base we have, the state and federal lands potentially train on, and the knowledge of trainers who have on the ground experience, the benefit for fire personnel to come to MT from all over the nation to learn is immense in fire suppression on our forests.

Agency/Function	Description	Conditions on the Money?	How Distributed?	How Much?	Need to be Appropriated?	Issues/Comments/Legislative Decision Points
DEQ/Water Quality Planning	Support for local water quality planning efforts.	40 percent must go to local planning entities	Direct	\$194,000	Yes	Funding would flow through the total maximum daily load (TMDL) program.
DNRC/Wildland Fire Management	Funding to states for hazardous fuels reduction and hazard mitigation activities in areas at high risk of catastrophic wildfire	None noted. Available through 9/30/2010	Through state and private forestry grants	\$250 Million, MT - Unknown	Yes	The legislature may wish to determine if these funds should be tied into proposals from the Fire Suppression Interim Committee, such as pilot fuel reduction projects and increased use of biomass.
Agency/Function	Description	Conditions on the Money?	How Distributed?	How Much?	Need to be Appropriated?	Issues/Comments/Legislative Decision Points
DOT/Transportation infrastructure - surface transportation competitive grants	For maintenance and construction of highways. (only preventative maintenance activities that can be proven to be a cost effective way to extend the life of an asset apply as maintenance)	Funding may be up to 100 percent federal (implies no state match is required).  To remain available through September 30, 2011.	Competitive grants to states, local governments, or transit agencies  Priority to projects that will have a significant impact on the Nation, a metropolitan area, or a region	Total federal starts at \$1.5 billion and increases as funds are withdrawn from formula grants when not obligated  State unknown (requires application and approval for grant funding)	No, would likely fall under the budget amendment statute (the Treasury Secretary must publish criteria on which to base the competition not later than 75 days after enactment)	